

Kissinger And The Spooks

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WASHINGTON—Shortly after he took over his post as President Nixon's top adviser on national security affairs, Dr. Henry Kissinger complained wryly to an aide that "These spooks really tell me more than I want to know about the birth rate in Cambodia."

Kissinger's reference was to the Republic's vast espionage empire, with its nearly 260,000 employees, its "secret" \$5-billion annual budget, and its penchant for overwhelming the White House with every scrap of incidental intelligence it can gather. The story is timely because at long last it appears that something will be done to reduce the size and cost of this empire. Sen. Allen Ellender, D-La., chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee, wants to cut \$800-million from the total intelligence budget, thereby eliminating 50,000 jobs. Defense Secretary Melvin Laird already is engaged in a reorganization plan to whittle down the size of the enormous military spy shop.

Laird got moving shortly after President Nixon, early this year, ordered a study of all intelligence operations. The pres-

tigious Central Intelligence Agency, which employs a variety of experts ranging from beauticians to nuclear scientists, is also expected to bite the economy bullet, albeit with a certain amount of kicking and screaming.

But the Pentagon will suffer most from the axe, for the simple reason that its intelligence community is the biggest and costliest—and possibly the least efficient. Laird presides over an establishment which includes the Defense Intelligence Agency, intelligence divisions of the three services and the super hush-hush National Security Agency, the nation's code-making and code-breaking apparatus. It is an establishment that employs some 150,000 people and spends an estimated \$2-billion a year.

Laird's spies are in trouble with President Nixon. He has been telling the defense Secretary for months that the military spy factory is "too damn big," and that its bigness apparently breeds inefficiency.

Specifically, although he boasted of both operations in public, Nixon was unhappy with the intelligence planning for the South Vietnamese incursion into Laos and the abortive prisoner-of-

war raid at Sontay. More recently, he has been "unimpressed"—as he told Laird—with intelligence on Viet Cong hit-and-run attacks in South Vietnam. Both the Pentagon and the CIA got a scolding from the President when they failed to discover Soviet missile installations near the Suez Canal during the summer of 1970.

Nixon also reportedly has cracked down on so-called "politico-sociological" studies conducted within friendly foreign countries by Army Intelligence, or G-2. After complaints from Secretary of State William Rogers, Nixon in July ordered the Pentagon to recall a research group dispatched to Czechoslovakia to prepare an estimate of the chances of a people's revolt.

Rogers is said to have described the project as representing a "dangerous gamble" that could get the U.S. in serious trouble. He compared it with the notorious 1965 "Camelot" project set up to determine the factors involved in promoting and inhibiting revolution in Chile. That operation was cancelled after a strong protest by the Chilean government, but by then it already had cost the taxpayers \$1-million.

Unfortunately, there is no guarantee that any administration by itself can reform an swollen intelligence community. Like all bureaucratic baronies it is a powerful lobby within the administration. No President wants to be accused of restraining, for budgetary reasons, a spy who might discover tomorrow that Red China has invented a new bomb. Eventually, if a real reorganization is to be realized, Congress will have to step in with its power of the purse strings.

But the Nixon administration is indeed making the first meaningful progress in intelligence reform since Harry Truman established the CIA. Even if Congress again shirks its responsibilities, the cast of spying almost surely will be reduced in the next year or two. Richard Nixon has a record for frugality.